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Georgia Southern University

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# Georgia Southern University



Men's Basketball Preview: Southern Meets State in Sun Belt Semis  
The game tips off at 3 p.m. ET on ESPN3.

Marc Gignac

Men's Basketball

Posted: 3/10/2018 9:02:00 AM

## Sun Belt Men's Basketball Championship

Georgia Southern (21-11, 11-7) vs. Georgia State (22-10, 12-6)

Saturday, March 10, 2018 - Lakefront Arena (10,000) – 3 p.m. ET

Series: GS leads 43-19, W1

Last Meeting: 2/16/18, W 85-80 (Hanner)

Television: [ESPN3](#)

Radio: GS Sports Network (pregame show starts a half hour before tipoff) - WMCD 107.3 FM (Statesboro), 630 AM WBMQ (Savannah), 1370 AM WLOP (Jesup)

[Live Video](#) | [Live Audio](#) | [Live Stats](#) | [Twitter Updates](#)

[Georgia Southern](#)

[Roster](#)

[Stats](#)

[Schedule](#)

[Georgia State](#)

[Roster](#)

[Stats](#)

[Schedule](#)

## Probable GS Starters:

#2 [Mike Hughes](#)

#3 [Ike Smith](#)

#4 [Tookie Brown](#)

#10 [Jake Allsmiller](#)

#14 [Coye Simmons](#)

## Setting the Scene

- Georgia Southern meets in-state rival Georgia State in the semifinal round of the Sun Belt Championship. Tipoff is slated for 3 p.m. ET on ESPN3.
- Georgia Southern entered the Sun Belt Tournament as the third seed for the second straight season after posting an 11-7 conference record. It's the third time the Eagles have finished in the top-3 in their four seasons in the league.
- Georgia Southern has reached 20 wins for the second time in four years and joined Louisiana and UTA as the only three Sun Belt schools to reach double-digit conference wins in each of the last four seasons.
- The first-round, quarterfinal and semifinal games are set for live coverage on ESPN3 with Sunday's championship game slated for live coverage on ESPN2. All games will be available on the WatchESPN app.

- Georgia Southern and Georgia State split the season series with each team winning at home.
- GS is 4-1 in its last five and coming off a 63-55 quarterfinal victory over ULM Friday night. The Eagles have won five of their last six overall.
- Seventeen of GS's 32 games have been decided by six points or less, and the Eagles are 10-7. Eleven have been one-possession games, and the Eagles are 5-6. GS is 3-5 in games decided by two points or less.
- [Tookie Brown](#) was named first-team All-Sun Belt for the third consecutive season. The junior is the 17th player in the 42-year history of the Sun Belt to earn first-team accolades in three seasons and becomes the first Eagle to accomplish the feat in Georgia Southern history.
- Georgia Southern is playing in its 38th Division I conference tournament this year. GS is 30-33 all-time in conference tournaments, 2-3 in the Sun Belt Tournament, 10-22 as the lower seed, 5-6 as the third seed and 5-7 in semifinal games.
- Georgia Southern is 11-8 away from home this season and 3-1 in neutral site games, as they advanced to the championship game of the Gulf Coast Showcase in November before falling 70-67 to Towson.
- Georgia Southern is playing without starting forward [Montae Glenn](#), who ranks second in the country in offensive rebounding. The junior injured his left knee in practice Wednesday in New Orleans and is out for the tournament.
- Georgia State is 3-2 in its last five and topped Troy 73-51 Friday to advance to the semifinal round.
- The Panthers are 11-7 away from home and 2-1 in neutral site games.
- Sun Belt Player of the Year D'Marcus Simonds averages 21.4 points, six rebounds and 4.6 assists a game.
- Along with moving on to the tournament final, the winner of the contest receives a bonus point in the Southern vs. State Rivalry Series, which State currently leads 10.5-1.5

#### The Series vs. Georgia State

- Georgia Southern leads the all-time series, which began in 1948, 43-19, but the Panthers are 10-6 in the last 16 meetings and have won five of the last eight.
- Georgia State topped the Eagles 38-36 in the 2015 Sun Belt Championship. It was the lowest-scoring Sun Belt game since the shot clock era began and the only time the teams have played in the Sun Belt Tournament.
- Five of the Eagles' last six wins in the series have all been by five points or less, and two were in overtime.
- Georgia Southern was 16-3 against the Panthers from 1985-1992, when both schools were members of the TAAC. The Eagles were 3-0 against the Panthers in the TAAC Tournament.
- Southern won all seven meetings before the Eagles began the Division I era in 1971-72.

#### Team Storylines

- Georgia Southern ranks 21st in the nation in offensive rebounds. The Eagles are fifth in the SBC in rebounding and second in offensive rebounds, and their rebound average of 38.2 is a 3.5 rebound per game improvement from last year (34.7).
- [Tookie Brown](#) is shooting 53.1 percent from the field, which ranks 62nd in the country. The junior is one of only two players listed under 6-foot ranked in the top-100. He also ranks 18th nationally in free throw attempts and 29th in makes.
- GS is averaging 76.2 points a game, and the Eagles have scored over 80 points 12 times, over 90 four times and over 100 twice. GS ranks third in the SBC in scoring and third in scoring margin.
- The Eagles have been without leading scorers and first-team Preseason All-Sun Belt selections [Ike Smith](#) or [Tookie Brown](#) for six games this season. GS has played without a starter seven times this season.
- Georgia Southern ranks second in the SBC in fewest turnovers, first in turnover margin and fourth in turnovers forced. The Eagles have posted 10 turnovers or less in 11 contests.
- Georgia Southern's top-5 seasons in 3-pointers made and attempted have all come during [Mark Byington](#)'s tenure. GS has made 10-plus triples in a game 13 times this season.
- [Mark Byington](#) is coaching in his 173rd career game today and his 162nd at Georgia Southern. He is three wins shy of 100 for his career, and his 90 wins in his first five seasons at Georgia Southern are the best of any coach in the modern era. He posted a 7-4 record at College of Charleston in 2012, filling in as the interim coach for Bobby Cremins.
- Byington signed a contract extension in February that will keep him at GS through 2022.
- This year's senior class features Byington's first crop of four-year players - [Mike Hughes](#), [Jake Allsmiller](#), [Coye Simmons](#) and [Shawn O'Connell](#) (R-Jr.). They have recorded 75 wins in their four years, the most since the 1993 class recorded 75.
- Under Byington, Georgia Southern is 63-14 in games when leading at half and 76-8 when leading with five minutes to go.
- The Eagles will be wearing green shoelaces for the rest of the season to promote Mental Health Awareness.
- Since joining the Sun Belt in 2014, 36 Georgia Southern games against Sun Belt schools have been decided by five points or less, and the Eagles are 22-13.
- The Eagles are 33-7 in Sun Belt games when leading at halftime. GS is 38-3 when leading with five minutes to go.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides current information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, which is fully responsive across all mobile devices. Information on Eagle athletics can also be found through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics and Instagram.com/GSAthletics. To purchase tickets to Georgia Southern athletics events, visit GSEagles.com/tickets.